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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
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TAGS: [MASS](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [QA](#) [SA](#) [AE](#) [KU](#) [LE](#) [PARM](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: REQUEST FOR AMMUNITION FROM GCC COUNTRIES

REF: A. A. STATE 138390

[1](#)B. B. BEIRUT 2841
[1](#)C. C. BEIRUT 2867

Classified By: Jeffrey D. Feltman, Ambassador. Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This cable includes an action request in Paragraph 7.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Through our discussions with contacts in the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and political leadership, it is clear there remains a critical need -- as expressed in reftel A -- to immediately equip the LAF to empower it to deploy in strength in the South and along the Lebanese-Syrian border while also maintaining an effective deterrent presence in other areas of Lebanon. We welcome the USG active leadership in identifying potential sources of assistance to the LAF. Of added concern, a recent conversation with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Elias Murr revealed that there may be a serious, potentially violent challenge by Hizballah and Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement against GOL authority in the coming months (reftel B), for which both the LAF and the ISF must be fully prepared.

[1](#)3. (C) We have heard from various sources -- and have ourselves assessed -- that the LAF is gravely under-equipped and is consequently suffering from a worsening lack of morale and an overall sense of inability to face down threats both internal and external. Unfortunately, the LAF's unpreparedness for combat is an open secret in Lebanon, so Syria, Hizballah and others know that they have little to worry about for the time being.

[1](#)4. (C) While there is a laundry list of specific LAF desires, this Embassy believes that what is needed most, and what will have the most immediate impact as far as morale and deterrent capability, is ammunition. Minister Murr also claimed ammunition as the most essential LAF priority at this time (reftel C). The Embassy has done an assessment, and conservatively estimates that the LAF has \$90 million in ammunition needs. This would include the required quantities for combat (eight basic loads) and the additional quantities for training for two years.

[1](#)5. (C) Of this, we determine that the most critical immediate need is for 5.56MM ammunition for M16A1 rifles --

at a cost of \$33.7 million. The LAF has 36,000 M16 rifles, 70 per cent of which are fully mission capable (according to CENTCOM's December 2005 equipment assessment). Of the 30 per cent that are not fully mission capable, many have minor external deficiencies and could still be used for training or combat. For this number of rifles, the requirement for eight basic loads and two years' of training ammunition is 99,600,000 rounds of M16 5.56MM ball. The LAF currently has on hand a paltry 2,650,000 rounds, or less than three per cent of its real need. Even without the training ammunition, the LAF still has less than six percent of its combat requirements.

¶16. (C) In addition to their other donations to the LAF, the GCC countries -- namely Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, and Qatar -- can again play a significant role in supporting Lebanon. These countries could quickly transfer significant amounts of ammunition -- whether of U.S. origin, which may take longer due to third country transfer requirements, or non-U.S. NATO origin -- to the Lebanese Armed Forces. This would apply to all LAF ammunition needs, but again the priority is for M16 rounds. Our local contacts believe that Saudi Arabia could provide 30 million rounds of M16 ball, and Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar could each provide 20 million. At 90 million rounds, the LAF would still not quite have enough ammunition to meet the requirements of 8 basic loads and two years of training for M16 rifles, but would be in a much stronger position. We believe this would also have an immediate positive impact on LAF morale and confidence. Hizballah fighters, who currently enjoy the confidence that the LAF is short of ammunition, will take notice by this assistance, which will also have a positive impact on public attitudes.

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¶17. (C) ACTION REQUEST: Embassy Beirut suggests that the Department consider, in addition to our other requests, asking posts in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar to approach host government officials to consider transferring the needed M16 ammunition to the LAF as soon as possible.
FELTMAN